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ABSTRACT

A developmental project was designed to improve the course of study for Reading Specialist Credential candidates at California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo (Cal Poly). The project is an example of action research that systematically developed an inservice presentation for improvement of classroom instruction in language arts. Reading Specialist candidates reviewed the literature, developed evaluation criteria, designed an inservice outline, and implemented the program in a variety of school settings. The Reading Coordination of the University Center for Teacher Education at Cal Poly validated the development process and the inservice by including both in the course of study for "Education 531: Supervision of Reading." The results of the project showed that the systematic development of an inservice on instructional grouping for an integrated language arts program did improve the training course of study for reading specialist candidates at Cal Poly. Recommendations include the implementation of the development process and inservice outline in the "Reading Specialist Course of Study" at Cal Poly. (Contains 12 references. Appendixes present an evaluation form, a grouping inservice outline, and a grouping inservice evaluation form.) (Author/RS)

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ED 384 002

THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN INSERVICE FOR INSTRUCTIONAL GROUPING IN AN INTEGRATED LANGUAGE ARTS CLASSROOM

Human Resource Development

by

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A practicum report presented to Nova University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Education

Nova University

March 1992

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN INSERVICE FOR INSTRUCTIONAL GROUPING IN AN INTEGRATED LANGUAGE ARTS CLASSROOM

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March 1992

This developmental project was designed to improve the course of study for Reading Specialist Credential candidates at California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo (Cal Poly). Graduates of the Reading Specialist Credential program must demonstrate competency in the supervision of classroom and school-wide reading programs. The ability to present appropriate inservice programs is essential to the role of the reading specialist as a resource for educational improvement.

This project is an example of action research that systematically developed an inservice presentation for the improvement of classroom instruction in language arts. Reading specialist candidates reviewed the literature,

developed evaluation criteria, designed an inservice outline, and implemented the program in a variety of school settings. The Reading Coordination of the University Center for Teacher Education at Cal Poly validated the development process and the inservice by including both in the course of study for Education 531: Supervision of Reading.

The purpose of this study was to address the problem of training resource personnel to be effective inservice presenters in the school setting. The results of the project showed that the systematic development of an inservice on instructional grouping for an integrated language arts program did improve the training course of study for reading specialist candidates at Cal Poly. Recommendations include the implementation of the development process and inservice outline in the Reading Specialist Course of Study at Cal Poly.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

> The goals of our educational reform movement are to prepare all students to function as informed and effective citizens in a democratic society, to function effectively in the world of work, and to realize personal fulfillment (Honig, 1987).

The most recent English-Language Arts Framework published by the California State Board of Education presents major changes for instructional procedures in reading (California State Department of Education, 1987). Traditionally, reading has been taught as a subject separate from other content areas or skill groupings. Basal reading series have dominated the instructional approach and influenced the goals and philosophies of teachers, school districts, and social groups (Chall, 1983). The new Framework seeks to integrate reading with the other language arts of writing, speaking, and listening. Further, a mandate is presented to the publishers of basal textbooks to revise instructional materials to support an integrated language arts philosophy. As publishers, teachers, and other implementors of the language arts curriculum seek to establish effective methods for achieving the goals of the new Framework, traditional instructional practices are being reevaluated and modified.

Background and Significance

For the past sixty years in America, basal textbook series have directed teachers to place students in instructional groups according to ability (Robinson, 1977). This practice allowed the teacher to provide instruction in small groups. Publishers assisted grouping practices by providing seat work for students who were not in the direct instruction group. Assessment and placement were made convenient through the use of published pre- and post-tests and checkup worksheets. Overall, ability grouping has proven itself efficient for the presentation of instruction and the monitoring of student progress, as well as for the environmental management of large groups of children (Farr and Fay, 1982). However, the evidence suggests that ability grouping may improve the achievement of the fast-learning child at the expense of the slow-learning child (U.S. Department of Education, 1985).

The current English-Language Arts Framework for the State of California calls for a language arts curriculum that allows equal access for all students, regardless of ability, to meaning-centered activities, age-appropriate literature, and an integrated presentation of reading skills. In effect, ability grouping is in direct opposition to the State philosophy and direction.

Nature of the Problem

The University Center for Teacher Education at California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo (Cal Poly) provides a course of study in reading that is designed to supplement the basic teaching credentials. This course of study, leading to the Reading Specialist Credential, includes training in the development and implementation of inservice programs for classroom teachers. According to a survey of students in the Reading Specialist Program in Fall, 1990, the inservice topic most requested by practicing teachers was strategies for grouping in an integrated language arts classroom. In particular, teachers were asking for direction for methods of providing equal access to instruction in classrooms with diverse ability levels. The problem was that of developing an inservice session in a way which met the course requirements for the Reading Specialist Credential while providing direction for instructional grouping that achieves equal access in an integrated language arts program.

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to systematically develop a teacher inservice on strategies for grouping students in an equitable manner for integrated language arts instruction. This inservice presented a set of criteria for grouping that was compatible with the California English-Language Arts

Framework. Alternatives to ability grouping and the focus of equal access in a multicultural, multilingual population were specifically included in the inservice.

The University Center for Teacher Education at Cal Poly, in accordance with credentialing requirements of the California Department of Education, offers a graduate level course entitled Education 531: Supervision of Reading. This course requires the development and implementation of relevant inservice projects for classroom teachers in the field of reading. Students in Education 531 are expected to present an inservice on a topical subject in reading to practicing teachers. Since grouping for instruction in integrated language arts is of current interest for practicing teachers, this project developed an appropriate inservice. The process of developing the inservice met the requirements for the Education 531 students at Cal Poly. The product developed served as a model for improving instruction for reading specialist candidates as well as for practicing classroom teachers.

Relationship to the Seminar

The purpose of the Human Resource Development Seminar at Nova University is to explore contemporary theories and practices in staff development and human resource management, and to examine the recruitment, supervision, staff development, and evaluation of personnel in educational

institutions. The central intention of this project was to develop a professional growth inservice for practicing teachers. The changes in schools and the teaching profession are important phenomena to consider as faculties in universities determine how they can best connect themselves to their professional fields for the purpose of contributing to human resource development (Arends, 1990).

Research Questions

The research questions addressed in this practicum were:

1. Did the systematic development of an inservice on instructional grouping for an integrated language arts program achieve the competency outcomes of Education 531: Supervision of Reading?
2. Was the inservice consistent with the philosophy and goals of the California English-Language Arts Framework?
3. Did the inservice meet the needs of practicing teachers in integrated language arts classrooms?

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Two major concepts were explored as this practicum evolved. First, literature concerning instructional grouping for language arts was reviewed to determine appropriate criteria for evaluating the content of the inservice to be developed. Secondly, direction for training the reading specialist candidates for their role as resource personnel was sought from professional literature.

The 1987 English and Language Arts Framework for California redefines literacy as a social communication skill rather than as a sequence of isolated content skills (California State Department of Education, 1987).

When reading is viewed as a means of learning about the world and its people, ability grouping, however manageable, becomes an unproductive strategy for achieving instructional goals. If students in a multicultural, multilingual classroom are to learn to communicate with each other, then instruction must be presented in a manner which enhances that communication while fostering the acquisition of language skills. In 1985, Becoming a Nation of Readers called for renewed attention to the professional growth of veteran teachers so that they might have access to new knowledge to

improve their teaching (U.S. Department of Education, 1985). As teachers change the traditional ability grouping concept and work toward equitable whole class groupings, practical inservices are needed to ensure professional growth and the effectiveness of the mandated educational reforms.

Whole language, the grassroots term that describes the philosophy of the California Framework, is a view of curriculum, language, and learning that is challenging the status quo. This view is founded on the principles of preserving the wholeness of literacy events, integrating reading, writing, speaking, and listening, and supporting learners through the use of authentic texts and authentic reasons for engaging in literacy activities (Vacca and Rasinski, 1992).

The California Framework clearly defines four criteria that must be considered for instructional grouping purposes. First, activities must be meaning-centered to enhance communication rather than fragmenting language into senseless pieces. Second, literacy includes the integration of all language skills: reading, writing, listening, speaking. Third, literature that is authentic must drive the curriculum. And fourth, equal access to such a program must be ensured for all students (California State Department of Education, 1987). These four criteria affect the format of classroom instruction. Teaching includes considerable discussion as students explore various strategies for reading literature and

try the approaches under guidance from the teacher. There is considerable teacher- and student-led interaction. Instruction usually takes place in small groups, formed according to individual interests and needs. These groups should be flexible to give students many opportunities to apply their reading abilities collaboratively and to respond individually to the literature (Norton, 1992).

As a meaning-centered, integrated language arts, literature-centered curriculum is developed, instructional grouping must focus upon the diverse clients in a classroom rather than upon a scope and sequence of skills. How are remedial readers to participate in literacy activities when they cannot decode the text? Instructional grouping strategies must take into account a wide variety of ability levels as well as individual backgrounds, interests, and needs (Crawley and Merritt, 1991). The set of criteria used in the development of this inservice on instructional grouping in an integrated language arts classroom was:

- All students, regardless of ability, background, ethnicity, language shall have access to meaning-centered activities and materials.
- All students shall receive instruction that connects reading, writing, listening, and speaking.
- All students will experience rich, natural language, age-appropriate literature that reflects the social and cultural values of a multiethnic society.

The second major concept considered in a review of the literature was that of training the reading specialist candidates for their role as resource personnel for practicing classroom teachers. The California Commission on Teacher Credentialing approved the Course of Study for Education 531: Supervision of Reading in February 1991. This course of study includes the competency "provide inservice education programs (Cal Poly, 1991)." The process of developing an inservice on instructional grouping needed to attend to the achievement of this competency.

> Much of the rhetorical literature of the staff development field has emphasized the effect of "buying in" toward the specific content of training. The proposition is frequently put forth that if teachers are attracted to, say, cooperative learning, prior to training, then they will participate enthusiastically, learn the content, and use it.... Until participants achieved a fairly good degree of control over the content of the training, commitment remained insubstantial but rose as competence rose.... It may be that helping persons develop competence and then judging the content will be a better course of action than trying to persuade people to "buy in" on the basis of superficial impressions (Joyce, Bennett, and Rolheiser-Bennett, 1990:27-28).

This summary article of research in the principles of staff development gave direction for the inservice development process. The reading specialist candidates needed to "own" the content of the inservice before the presentation could be outlined. The inservice needed to include actual, guided participation to ensure acquisition of content, and the

inservice evaluation should take place after the content has been acquired.

> Many experts in the field have questioned the validity of the term "peer supervision" because supervision implies "a superordinate-subordinate relationship (Alfonso and Goldsberry, 1982)." Semantics aside, if instructional improvement and teacher growth are the principle goals of supervision, peer collaboration can be a more effective, efficient, and rewarding way to meet these goals than traditional hierarchical supervision (Bang-Jensen, 1986:51).

Collaborative learning is a strategy that was incorporated in the inservice development process. The reading specialist candidates were directed to work in pairs to compile the content of the inservice and the presentation outline.

> An effective practitioner approaches each problem as a unique case. He does not act as though he has no relevant prior experience, on the contrary. But he attends to the peculiarities of the situation at hand. He does not behave as though he were looking for cues to a standard solution.... Successful practitioners learn while doing...they continuously reflect on their activity and adjust each successive step on the basis of this reflection (Schon, 1983).

Schon's observations for the effective practitioner led to the design of an open-ended format for the inservice. While content presentation needed structure, the inservice was outlined rather than scripted. This allowed individual presenters to "read the audience" and reflect continuously upon the effectiveness of each unique inservice event.

The review of the literature resulted in a set of criteria for evaluating the inservice outline and the development process. The content of the inservice needed to address a specific list of criteria that evolved from recent research in reading instruction. The process of creating the inservice attended to principles of motivation, evaluation, collaborative learning, and reflective learning.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

The research methodology employed in this practicum was developmental. Procedures followed the steps described in Handbook in Research and Evaluation (Isaac and Michael, 1990).

Procedures

First, the thirty reading specialist candidates enrolled in Education 531: Supervision of Reading were given the task of collaboratively (in pairs) writing a thirty minute presentation on effective grouping for instruction in an integrated language arts classroom. The set of criteria was described and discussed, as were the principles of motivation, evaluation, collaborative learning and reflective learning. Each team was assigned the task of writing an inservice outline that allowed for individual presentation styles while covering the established content of the inservice.

Next, the reading specialist candidates presented the inservices in class and formulated a single outline with an evaluation instrument to be used at the conclusion of each presentation in the field. Students were given the opportunity to adapt the outline to attend to personal styles before giving the presentation to classroom teachers.

Third, each 531 student individually presented the inservice to a group of 10 to 15 classroom teachers in an after school meeting. No audience received more than one presentation and all participants completed an evaluation form (Appendix C).

Fourth, reading specialist candidates were given a self-evaluation form to assess achievement of the inservice competency for Education 531. All of the thirty students completed an evaluation form.

Last, the inservice outline and evaluation data were submitted to the Reading Coordination of the Center for Teacher Education at Cal Poly for review. Upon validation by this committee, the development strategy and inservice outline were included in the Education 531 Course of Study.

Definition of Terms

Inservice. This project defines the term inservice as a professional development activity for practicing classroom teachers. An inservice session should include research-based content, interactive participation, and at least thirty minutes of presentation.

Integrated language arts. The treatment of reading as a whole language communication skill rather than sequence of isolated decoding skills is described in this project as integrated language arts. Reading, writing, listening, and

speaking skills are taught concurrently in an integrated language arts classroom.

Assumptions

For this project, it was assumed that the reading specialist candidates possessed background knowledge of effective grouping strategies. Each student met a prerequisite requirement for Education 531 that included coursework in grouping procedures.

Limitations

The project was limited to the County of San Luis Obispo, California. Inservices were presented to teachers practicing in a multicultural, multilingual environment. All of the inservice participants were using integrated language arts textbook programs and all had requested the grouping program. Attendance at the inservices was voluntary. Total presentation time was limited to 45 minutes.

Data Collection

A single evaluation form was given to each inservice participant at the conclusion of the presentation. The form included a Likert scale for rating attendance of the inservice to the set of criteria applicability of the content to classroom teaching practice, and attitude of the participant toward implementing the strategies presented.

A self-evaluation form was given to each 531 student at the conclusion of the project. This form allowed for written comment as well as a ranking of the effectiveness of the activity.

Treatment of the Data

The Likert-type evaluation form was collected from each of the 308 inservice participants. These summated rating scales were used to determine an individual attitude score for each participant. Attitude scores generated a percentile of positive versus negative responses to the inservice presentation.

The self-evaluation form given to each of the thirty Education 531 students generated a compilation of subjective comments and a cumulative scale total score. Total scores were examined to determine whether or not the clear-cut attribute of competency achievement had been met.

Chapter 4

RESULTS

The thirty Education 531 students received two hours of lecture reviewing effective grouping procedures for integrated language arts. This lecture also reviewed the mandate of the California Reading/Language Arts Framework and presented the set of criteria described in Chapter 2. The students were given a week to work in pairs to write an initial inservice presentation on grouping strategies. All teams completed the assignment within one week.

After one week, each team presented their inservice to a group of six Education 531 students for revision. The class then met as a whole to collaboratively create a single outline that allowed for individual presentation style while covering the essential content of the inservice (see Appendix B).

Next, the whole class collaboratively developed an evaluation instrument to be used at the completion of each presentation (see Appendix C). An attitude score of 6-12 was determined to be a positive response, from 24-30 a negative response, and from 12-24 a neutral response.

Each Education 531 student then scheduled a 45 minute after-school inservice for teachers in a school district. Minimum attendance was established for ten participants, with

a maximum of fifteen. Participants could not attend more than one presentation. At the conclusion of the inservice each of 308 total participants completed an evaluation form.

Attitude scores were totaled by the Education 531 students, all of whom reported a 90-100 percent positive response. Then, each student completed a self-evaluation form to assess achievement of the Education 531 inservice competency (see Appendix A). All thirty students achieved the competency. Comments were compiled and included in a course evaluation.

The Grouping Inservice Outline, Grouping Inservice Evaluation Form, and Education 531 Evaluation Form were submitted to the Reading Coordination of the University Center for Teacher Education at Cal Poly. The Reading Coordination included all three documents in the Course of Study for Education 531: Supervision of Reading.

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Discussion

This project satisfied the major goal of the University Center for Teacher Education of providing quality teacher preparation and inservice instruction. The need of practicing integrated language arts teachers for direction in effective grouping procedures was answered, and the need for reading specialists to obtain competency in inservice development and presentation was addressed. The inservice outline meets the criteria established by the California Department of Education, and this development process followed current principles for staff development procedures.

The purpose of this project was to systematically develop a teacher inservice on strategies for grouping students in an equitable manner for integrated language arts instruction. The product developed is a model for improving instruction for reading specialist candidates as well as for practicing classroom teachers.

Conclusions

An inservice that presents effective strategies for grouping in an integrated language arts classroom was positively received by practicing teachers. This inservice attended to criteria established by the State of California while allowing for individual presentation styles.

A collaborative process of developing an inservice that addresses the principles of motivation, evaluation, interaction, and reflection was effective for achieving the Education 531: Supervision of Reading inservice competency requirement consistent with the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing. The goal of improving instruction at two levels, elementary classroom and teacher preparation, was achieved.

Implications

The implications of this project are that collaboratively created inservices will be positively received by practicing teachers, and that preparation for the role of reading resource person can be effectively advanced through the process of developing an inservice. The development process and the inservice outline were enhanced by including specific criteria, structure, and creativity. Motivation, interactivity, reflective learning, collaboration, and

evaluation are key elements to incorporate in the inservice as well as in the process of creating the inservice.

Recommendations

The University Center for Teacher Education at California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo should include the collaborative inservice development process in courses designed to prepare teachers for the role of resource person in the public schools. The Center should present these inservices to practicing teachers for improvement of the teaching process and ongoing evaluation.

Educational practice at the higher education and elementary levels will be improved through the incorporation of this project in Education 531: Supervision of Reading. The results of this project will be disseminated to the Center for Teacher Education at Cal Poly for consideration in the development of other teacher preparation courses. Education 531: Supervision of Reading has scheduled the implementation of this inservice development project for future class sessions.

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APPENDIX A

EDUCATION 531 EVALUATION FORM

		Yes	No
1.	Did you work collaboratively with your partner to develop an inservice outline?	_____	_____
2.	Was the set of criteria for evaluating the inservice clear?	_____	_____
3.	Did you adapt the inservice for your own teaching style?	_____	_____
4.	Were you satisfied with the results of your inservice evaluation?	_____	_____
5.	Did you achieve the inservice presentation competency for Education 531?	_____	_____

Comments:

APPENDIX B

GROUPING INSERVICE OUTLINE

I. Objectives, Purpose, Introduction

A. To effectively group students for instruction in an integrated language arts classroom

B. Comparison of past and present philosophies of reading

II. Input

A. Grouping procedures in the past

1. Strengths, advantages
2. Weaknesses, problems

B. Grouping procedures in the present

1. Whole group
2. Cooperative group
3. Flexible skill group
4. Individual group

III. Interactive Practice

A. Whole group in small groups

B. Cooperative group behaviors

C. Lesson planning for flexible groups

D. Individual group assessment

IV. Conclusion, Closure

V. Evaluation

APPENDIX C

GROUPING INSERVICE EVALUATION FORM

1. The inservice gave direction for equal access to reading, writing, listening, speaking activities in the classroom.

Agree				Disagree
1	2	3	4	5

2. The inservice gave direction for equal access to meaning-centered instruction.

Agree				Disagree
1	2	3	4	5

3. The inservice gave direction for equal access to literature-based instruction.

Agree				Disagree
1	2	3	4	5

4. I am likely to implement the strategies presented.

Agree				Disagree
1	2	3	4	5

5. The inservice allowed for active participation.

Agree				Disagree
1	2	3	4	5

6. The inservice allowed for individual teaching styles.

Agree				Disagree
1	2	3	4	5